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Hostages Reportedly Seen in Beirut

Kuwaiti Newspaper Says 3 Americans Are Held in Basement

Reuter

KUWAIT, April 27—Reporters for a Kuwaiti newspaper have visited an American Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Benjamin Weir, and two other unidentified Americans kidnaped in Lebanon, the paper, Al Watan, reported today.

The daily said its correspondents visited a basement in a partially built Beirut building in which Weir, kidnaped in May 1984, and two other Americans were held. It did not name the other two. It said a fourth American was being held outside

Beirut. It also published the kidnappers' terms for the release of the Americans and French kidnap victims held in Lebanon.

The daily said that before freeing the Americans the kidnappers wanted the release of "people jailed in Kuwait for the known bombings," an apparent reference to a wave of blasts in the Persian Gulf state in December 1983.

The bombings, for which 17 persons are being held in jail here, damaged the U.S. and French embassies and several Kuwaiti govern-

ment targets, leaving six dead and more than 80 injured.

Al Watan said conditions for release of the French hostages were linked to "a change in France's attitude to the gulf war." France has provided Iraq with weapons.

The other Americans being held hostage in Lebanon are William Buckley, a political officer at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut; the Rev. Martin Lawrence Jenco, a Roman Catholic priest and director of Catholic Relief Services in Lebanon; Pe-

ter Kilburn, librarian at the American University of Beirut, and Terry A. Anderson, Beirut bureau chief for The Associated Press. One other American hostage, Jeremy Levin of Cable News Network, escaped from his captors in February.

[State Department spokeswoman Sondra McCarty said in Washington that the department had seen the report and was looking into it. "We are doing everything we can to obtain" the hostages' release, she added. She declined to elaborate.]

Al Watan did not specify who was holding the prisoners.

Callers in Lebanon claiming ties with the Islamic Jihad (Holy War) group have said they hold the five Americans, a Saudi diplomat and a number of French and British nationals abducted during the past 16 months. Al Watan made no mention of a fifth American hostage or of Britons.

The hostages were allowed to correspond with their families, the paper said. It reproduced a handwritten note, dated April 10 and signed by Weir, to his wife, Carol, and family. It was not clear whether the note had been mailed.

Weir wrote: "I thank God I am still alive, and in the spirit have celebrated Easter with you. I think of you often and thank God for your love and faith, as I am sure you and friends pray for me."

"I am sure God is with you and me, and that His will is good, acceptable and perfect. I love you very much and thank God that He sustains us with His everlasting grace and love."

The paper gave no details of the conditions in which the kidnap victims were held. It said particularly close secrecy surrounded the Saudi diplomat.

Al Watan said the kidnappers' "political leaders" had little to do with the captives and perhaps did not even know their whereabouts.

It said the kidnappers saw an advantage in releasing news of the hostages, to keep alive the issue "of the imprisoned people [in Kuwait] who belong to the Islamic Jihad group."

Quoting reliable information, it said an Arab country that it did not name was mediating efforts to secure the release of the kidnap victims.

Carol Weir has visited Damascus to try to enlist the help of Syria,

which has troops controlling much of Lebanon.